

June 2007 - HAPPINESS MATTERS

It seems we are always thinking about bettering ourselves, making more money, fulfilling some lifelong goal. But underlying all of our actions and dreams lay one purpose – to find happiness. Strangely enough, research is showing that being wealthy and/or being thin are not the best paths to happiness.

[WeightMatters](#) explores how diet, laughter, and friends can be worth more than a size zero wardrobe and an endless stream of cash.

diet



The Food-Mood Connection

It only makes sense that what we eat would have an effect on our emotions. Anyone who has ever reached for a bowl of chocolate ice cream to drown their sorrows knows the comforting effects of familiar childhood foods. But is there a chemical reason why some foods are more likely to be comfort foods than others?

Serotonin is a chemical our bodies produce that has a calming and relaxing effect. Carbohydrates when eaten alone and without protein increase serotonin levels. So that big bowl of pasta or that plate of cookies really does decrease stress and tension. The downside is that it also makes us feel sleepy and sluggish, as well as slowing our reaction time.

To avoid some of the negative effects of carbohydrates, be sure to focus on eating ones that are low on the Glycemic Index. Doing so will promote the more focused, calming aspect of serotonin release and less of the sleepy, sluggish feeling. These carbohydrates include brown rice, buckwheat, whole grain rye bread, sweet potato, and most wheat pastas.

While lower stress levels can enhance our level of happiness, other foods can have a potentially positive impact on our moods. Salmon or any other cold-water fish contains the mood-elevating vitamin B12 as well as omega-3 fatty acids that may assist in preventing depression. Omega-3 raises serotonin levels in the brain. Eating fish to regulate your mood isn't instantaneous, it is a long-term process and therefore it would be beneficial to regularly incorporate fish into your diet.

Other happy-enhancing additions to your diet could include bananas and chicken livers. Bananas contain vitamin B6, which is known to build serotonin levels. If you regularly drink alcohol or if you are taking birth control pills, you could be depleting your body of vitamin B6.

Chicken livers, as are spinach and other dark green vegetables, are high in folic acid, which promotes the brain's production of feel-good neurotransmitters.

Every little bit of positive nutrition can add up to a great deal of satisfaction and a much sunnier disposition. [Contact WeightMatters for dietary changes to improve your mood!](#)

exercise



Laugh Yourself

Fit Can laughter replace your treadmill time? No, but getting the giggles does burn some calories, and the more you laugh, the more you burn, say experts at Vanderbilt University.

Their study recruited 45 pairs of friends (we're more likely to laugh with others in the room than when we're alone) to watch comedy video clips, including episodes of Saturday Night Live and the movies There's Something About Mary and Austin Powers.

The volunteers viewed the scenes in a room equipped with a device that measures the number of calories burned, and each person was hooked up to a heart rate monitor. At the end of the session, researchers determined that laughing increased heart rate by 10 to 20 percent and burned about 1.3 calories per minute. That's similar to the so-called workout you'd get typing, filing, or playing cards. Jogging, on the other hand, burns about 10 calories per minute. "Pay attention to small things. Every calorie counts," says lead study author Maciej S. Buchowski, PhD. Chuckle for 15 minutes every day for a year and you could drop up to four pounds - and that's nothing to laugh at.

mind



7 Ways to Increase Happiness

Happiness is getting to be big business. In the mid-90s, scientific journals published about 100 studies on sadness for every one study on happiness. In the past decade countless books have been published on how to be happy, how to find happiness, and how have happier families.

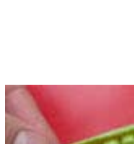
Now a burgeoning "positive psychology" movement that emphasizes people's strengths and talents instead of their weaknesses is rapidly growing as a serious avenue of research, says University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin E. P. Seligman, author of the new book, Authentic Happiness.

One of the main findings in all of the current research is that "materialism is toxic for happiness," says University of Illinois psychologist Ed Diener. Even rich materialists aren't as happy as those who care less about getting and spending.

But there are things that most certainly do make us happy, social researchers say:

1. **Work.** It gives us a sense of identity, purpose and value in our lives.
2. **Pets.** Research shows that for day to day happiness, pet owners score higher than non-pet owners.
3. **Friends.** The happiest of people are seldom alone and have active and rich social lives.
4. **Activities, pastimes, and leisure pursuits.** Active ones like sports, outdoor activities and clubs for example, rather than passive pastimes like playing computer games or watching TV, which don't involve much social interaction rate high on the happiness enhancing scale.
5. **Regular exercise** boosts the body's naturally-occurring pain-killing substances called endorphins and encourages social interaction.
6. **A positive outlook**, and not dwelling on the past.
7. **Helping others.** Why altruism makes us happy is something of a mystery – it may have something to do with the feeling that we're helping to build the better community from which we as individuals will ultimately benefit.

[WeightMatters Coaches](#) will motivate you to achieve life balance, your target weight and greater happiness!



Recipe of the month

Dark green vegetable like spinach and peas are high in folate, which may help stabilize your mood because it's needed to help make serotonin.

Mixed Greens and Pea Salad

INGREDIENTS:

- 300 grams bag pre washed fresh baby spinach leaves
- 300 grams bag mixed baby greens
- 350 grams frozen baby green peas, thawed
- 75 ml olive oil
- 50 ml lemon juice
- 1 tsp. prepared mustard
- salt and pepper to taste

PREPARATION:

Combine spinach, greens, and peas in small bowl. In small bowl, combine olive oil, lemon juice, mustard, salt and pepper and whisk to blend. Just before serving, pour dressing over salad and toss gently to coat.

Quote of the month

"If you want to live a happy life, tie it to a goal, not to people or things." Albert Einstein



WM Fact #51

"We give you a winning formula for success!"